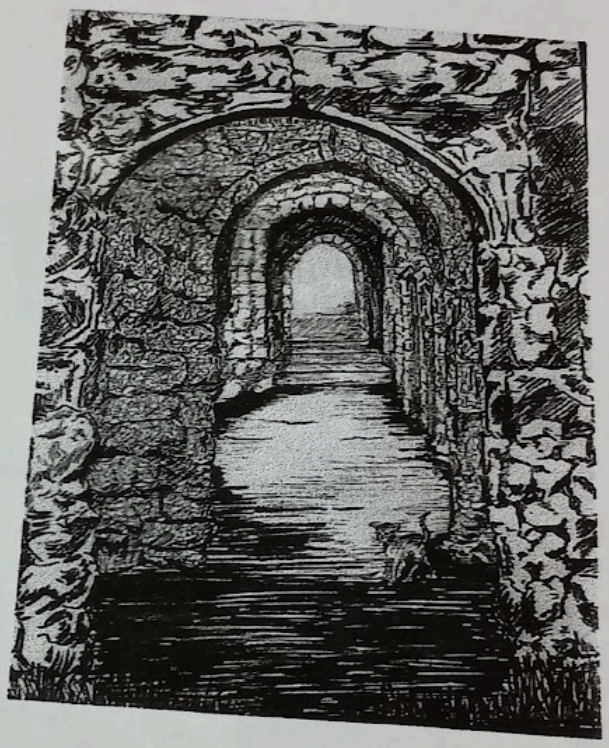
Midwestern Arts Survey

Marianna Lewis (b. 1930, Minnesota; active Wisconsin) continues to reward close looking. Two recent portfolio sheets—a colored-pencil/watercolor study of a harpist and a pen-and-ink rendering of a stone passageway—reaffirm the disciplined craft that has long distinguished her from casual regionalists.

Lewis's harpist leans, unapologetically, into Art-Nouveau lyricism: the sweeping diagonal of the harp anchors the composition, while a lime-green gown unfurls in serpentine folds worthy of Mucha. Skin tones are softly modeled, and the floral coronet strikes a pleasing chromatic accord with the surrounding roses. Only the slightly schematic right hand hints at the artist's occasional struggle with extremities; elsewhere, color layering and fabric highlights display confident control of the medium.

early-20th-century illustration are being re-evaluated—Lewis deserves fresh critical attention as a disciplined practitioner whose portfolio bridges those legacies with quiet authority.



The ink drawing, by contrast, is a study in tonal restraint. Lewis coaxes convincing depth from nothing more than cross-hatch, stipple, and sparing white reserves. The battered masonry reads tactile and weighty; the receding arches settle neatly on a single vanishing point, guiding the eye to a bloom of light at path's end. A small cat—rendered in barely a dozen strokes—animates the scene and showcases the artist's ability to suggest life with the fewest possible marks.

Across both works, Lewis demonstrates a compositional sure-hand and an illustrator's instinct for narrative clarity. Her vocabulary is traditional rather than experimental, yet within that idiom she manipulates texture, value, and line with notable finesse. In the